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Jonathan French, Esq.

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Influence of Religion on Liberty.

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DISCOURSE

IN COMMEMORATION OF

THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIMS,

DELIVERED AT PLYMOUTH,

DECEMBER 22, 1830.

BY BENJAMIN B. WISNER,
Pastor of the Old South Church in Boston.

Boston:

PERKINS & MARVIN, 114, WASHINGTON STREET.

1831.

At a Meeting of the PILGRIM ASSOCIATION, held at Plymouth, Dec. 22, 1830 ;

Resolved, That the thanks of this Association be presented to the Rev. Dr. WISNER for the Discourse delivered by him, this day, in commemoration of the LANDING OF OUR PILGRIM FATHERS ; and that he be very respectfully and earnestly requested to furnish a copy for publication.

A true extract from the minutes,

ELIJAH DEXTER, { *Scribe of Association,*
pro tem.

To the Rev. Dr. Wisner.

DEAR SIR,

In the above expression of thanks, and in the request for the publication of your Discourse, we most cordially unite in behalf of the Third Congregational Church, and those associated with it in the religious services of this day.

Very respectfully,

your most obedient servants,

ANDREW MACKIE, } *Committee of*
JOSIAH ROBBINS, } *Arrangements.*
F. FREEMAN,

Plymouth, Dec. 22, 1830.

From pph vol 410
851 44
For the 1st Church of Christ
Apr 13, 1868.
NOTED TO V TIO

S E R M O N .



Deuteronomy xxxii. 9, 10, 11, 12.

THE LORD'S PORTION IS HIS PEOPLE ; JACOB IS THE LOT OF HIS INHERITANCE. HE FOUND HIM IN A DESERT LAND, AND IN THE WASTE HOWLING WILDERNESS : HE LED HIM ABOUT, HE INSTRUCTED HIM, HE KEPT HIM AS THE APPLE OF HIS EYE. AS AN EAGLE STIRRETH UP HER NEST, FLUTTERETH OVER HER YOUNG, SPREADETH ABROAD HER WINGS, TAKETH THEM, BEARETH THEM ON HER WINGS ; SO THE LORD ALONE DID LEAD HIM, AND THERE WAS NO STRANGE GOD WITH HIM.

THE occasion on which we are assembled is sacred to the memory of the Puritans. Besides the descendants of Jacob, no class of men have been made the instruments of so much good. The infidel historian of England,—“ who,” it has been justly said,* “ through the whole course of his history, lies in wait for an opportunity of throwing discredit upon the cause of both religion and liberty,” and who, as every one knows that has any acquaintance with his writings, bore a specially malignant hate against the Puritans,—even Hume has said, that, in Great Britain, “ the precious spark of liberty ” was “ kindled, and was preserved, by the Puritans alone ; and it was to this sect, whose principles,” in his view, “ appear so frivolous and habits so ridiculous, that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.”† And to them, of course, we may add, are mankind indebted for all the influence of the example and the power and the benevo-

* By the English translator of the “ Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation by Luther, by Charles Villers, 8vo. London, 1805.” p. 108, Note.

† History of England, iii. 76. Philadelphia, 8vo. 1822.

lence of the British nation in diffusing the blessings of freedom and of Christianity through the earth. And here, on this western continent, the Puritans were the principal instruments in founding institutions that are now blessing more than twelve millions of people with domestic, social, civil and religious privileges in an extent and a purity never before known, and which are the admiration and the envy of the world. These institutions, if they shall be faithfully preserved and adequately extended, and our population shall advance as heretofore, will, in this land, before the children of some now living shall die, make thus happy two hundred millions of human beings. And from these institutions has gone forth an influence, which has already emancipated from the yoke of foreign despotism this whole continent; greatly meliorated the condition of the entire European population; shaken to its foundation, in that quarter of the globe, every fabric of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny; and promises to be, in the hand of Providence, the chief instrument of overturning and overturning and overturning in the earth, till, every where, "the yoke of" the people's "burden" shall be "broken," and "the oppressed" set "free," and "righteousness" shall "spring forth before all nations," and "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."* Noble and signally honored race! In them, next after the seed of faithful Abraham, it seems, is to be fulfilled the promise, In you "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."†

HOW WERE THEY PREPARED FOR BEING THEMSELVES SO SIGNALLY BLESSED, AND TO OTHERS SO SIGNAL A BLESSING?

This, it is at once perceived, is a radical and most important inquiry. The inhabitants of Spain or Italy could never

* Isaiah ix. 4; lviii. 6; lxi. 11; xxxii. 17.

† Says Villers, a French writer, in his Essay already referred to, written in 1802, "Among the vast number of remote and immediate causes which contributed to this great event [the first French revolution] must not be forgotten the American republic." "Who can tell what may happen to both worlds from the seducing example of that independence which the Americans obtained by conquest? What new position would the world acquire, if that example were followed? And without doubt, in the end, it will be so." p. 244.

have established and perpetuated the New England colonies, and accomplished the North American revolution. There must be a certain preparation, a particular character formed, before free institutions can be established among a people upon a permanent basis.

There must, in the first place, be a general diffusion of sufficient *intelligence* to enable the mass of the people to understand and vindicate their rights. History has demonstrated, and therefore I need not occupy time in proving, that a people sunk in ignorance are wholly incapable of acquiring and preserving the blessings of civil and religious freedom.

But knowledge alone does not prepare men for these blessings. Some of the most eminent men for talents and learning that have ever lived, have been the most obsequious minions of despotism. A community generally immoral cannot, from the nature of the case, enjoy the benefits of free institutions. Rational liberty exists in any country, in proportion as the sovereignty is lodged in and rightly exercised by the people. A perfectly free government is, in fact, "the people governing themselves by an expression of their moral feeling and their will in the form of laws." Of course, if the people are generally corrupt in their moral principles and habits, wholesome laws will not be enacted. And if they were enacted, they would not be executed: for, in such a government, those who are appointed to execute the laws will, of course, be guided in their administration by the tone of public sentiment. If wholesome laws exist, there must be in the community a moral sentiment that will approve and demand their execution. Hence the truth, which has become a political axiom, that VIRTUE IS THE FOUNDATION OF A REPUBLIC. The mere increase of knowledge among a population, who have been sunk in intellectual and moral, as well as political, debasement, may produce impatience of servitude, and lead to a revolution. But, as the people are not influenced by virtuous principle, and are, consequently, not accustomed to self-restraint, every man will think that liberty

consists in following his own inclinations ; and scenes of anarchy will ensue, which will soon cause the return of a general preference for “the calm of despotism.” Ample confirmation of these remarks was furnished by the first French revolution ; and, I fear, is now furnishing by the Mexican and South American republics. But if, while intelligence has been diffused, virtuous principles have been imbibed, and virtuous habits formed, among a people ; then they are capable of self-government, they are qualified to be free.

This indispensable preparation for liberty had been made, and well made, among our Puritan ancestors. Hence their complete success in establishing essentially free institutions immediately upon their arrival in this western world, and in preserving them during the hundred and fifty years of their colonial existence, and, with the help of their brethren of a kindred spirit in other colonies, perfecting them, and placing them, as we trust, upon a durable basis, in our revolution.

The question, therefore, returns, with increased interest, How was this preparation made ? The correct answer, as it will be my principal object to show in this discourse, is, that IT WAS PRODUCED CHIEFLY BY THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT INFLUENCES OF RELIGION.

Christianity, all history testifies, is the most powerful moral cause that has ever been brought to operate on mankind. Affecting, as it necessarily does when its real or pretended claims are at all regarded, the very springs of human action, and entering into all the conduct and relations of life, it cannot but exert a mighty influence. Wherever it has prevailed, whether in its simplicity and purity, or in the various forms of distortion and corruption which it has been made to assume, it has invariably produced great effects.

As originally constituted by its divine Founder, the Church was a well ordered republic : all the members were placed on an equality, and there was no authority but that which was voluntarily given to superior intelligence and virtue ; and the

only power exercised was a moral power. Thus constituted, the Christian Church commenced its progress from the metropolis of Judea. And, in less than three hundred years, notwithstanding the most powerful and determined opposition, it spread itself over the whole Roman empire, which was then the whole known world.

The rulers and wise men of this world now began to perceive, that if the character and influence of the Church should remain unchanged, their usurped dominion would, for reasons which will be developed in the sequel of this discussion, soon come to an end. On the other hand, they wisely conjectured that, if its constitution could be so modified as to bring it into alliance with civil institutions, and make it subservient to political purposes, as Paganism had been, it would afford a far more efficient support of their despotic authority. The experiment was made ; and made with fatal success. The Ministers of Jesus Christ, who had been unmoved by the frowns of power, were fascinated and seduced by its smiles. The desired change was, gradually, but completely, effected. And most deplorable were the consequences. The great body of professed Christians soon relapsed into the grossest ignorance ; and “the mighty energies of a religion which connects man with eternity,” were made subservient to the base designs of an ambitious and profligate clergy in alliance with unprincipled rulers. And all Christendom was enveloped in a long night of thick intellectual, moral and political darkness.

The lamp of heaven was not, however, extinguished. During the whole period so justly denominated “the dark ages,” there were spots which its glimmering faintly illumined ; and now and then it shot forth a ray of light, which fell upon the mind of some favored individual, and scattered from it the gloom, which still rested on all around.

At length, after a lapse of ten centuries, the bright morning of the Reformation dawned upon the earth. An event fraught with more blessings to mankind than any other since

that which angels announced in the field of Bethlehem, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will to men."*

The grand moving spirit of the Reformation, as every one knows, was the love of religion. No views of secular or ecclesiastical ambition mingled with and corrupted the motives of the first and principal actors in its wonderful scenes. They were excited and sustained and carried forward in their noble achievements, by a single, ardent, enduring and all conquering love for what they deemed the cause of God and of human salvation.

The fundamental principle of the Reformation was—that **THE BIBLE IS THE SOLE DEPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH ; AND THAT, CONSEQUENTLY, TO ASCERTAIN THE DOCTRINES AND DUTIES OF RELIGION, THE FIRST AND FINAL RESORT MUST BE TO THE SCRIPTURES.** "THE BIBLE," said they, "**THE BIBLE IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.**"† Truly wonderful, and equally salutary, were the effects produced by this single principle.

To qualify themselves as translators and thorough interpreters of the Bible, the Reformers saw they must make themselves acquainted with the original languages of Scripture, and with the various stores of ancient learning so intimately connected with the science of sacred criticism. And to expose and refute the reasonings of their antagonists, they found it necessary to make themselves familiar with the writings of the Fathers, and the history of councils and decretals, and of the fluctuations and changes of civil and ecclesiastical power, and the various systems of ancient philosophy. To these studies they applied themselves, with great diligence and success. And to facilitate their progress, and

* If the reader desires to see ample confirmation of this statement, he will find it in Villers' Essay ; a work that ought to be studied by every friend and advocate of civil and religious freedom.

† Chillingworth afterward thus expressed their fundamental principle. The meaning of this maxim is not, of course, as some have pretended to understand it, that this was the only sentiment which the Reformers regarded as essential, but (what the maxim expresses) that all doctrines and authoritative precepts and examples in regard to religion must be derived ultimately from Scripture.

diffuse as extensively as possible this important knowledge, they established colleges, and collected libraries, and sent forth innumerable publications. The Protestant universities, moreover, were not, as those of the Catholics had been, resorted to by few but youth destined to the priesthood. They were open alike to all ; and were soon crowded with students. Emulation was enkindled ; facilities of improvement were rapidly multiplied ; and a progress made in knowledge which, in preceding ages, would have been thought impossible.

Another effect of the fundamental principle of the Reformers was, to take nothing upon authority. The Church of Rome said, *Submit, without examination, to authority.* The Protestants said, *Examine, and submit only to your own conviction.* And wherever the maxim was adopted, the shackles which had for centuries bound fast the human intellect were broken, and the barriers erected against investigation and the communication of thought were overthrown. Men were made free in the inmost sanctuary of the soul, and dared to look freely and boldly around them. Light broke forth, and shot its rays in every direction. Mental activity and energy were greatly promoted ; and information extensively and rapidly diffused.

A violent controversy was also carried on between the Reformers and the Papists, which served still more to rouse and invigorate the minds of men. So great were the interests at stake, and so important the consequences of victory or defeat, that every power of those engaged in the contest was put in requisition, and exerted to the very utmost. Intellectual energy was thus greatly and rapidly increased, and knowledge of all kinds advanced. And this influence, every where, preponderated immensely in favor of the Protestants ; because, while their adversaries were hampered by the dicta and conflicting opinions of Fathers, and the decrees of Councils, and the bulls of Popes, they went directly to the Bible,

and, with untrammelled minds, inquired, What saith the Lord ?

Another consideration which must not be omitted is, that the simple study of the Bible itself, if it be pursued with any measure of attention and diligence, produces a wonderful effect in elevating the intellectual character. No mind can be frequently thus employed without being strengthened. While the repeated, and especially the believing, contemplation of the sublime truths with which it thus becomes acquainted—the wonderful facts disclosed in the Scriptures concerning the nature and ways of God, the method of redeeming mercy, the realities of eternity, and its connection with the feelings and actions of the present life—must exert, all experience proves does invariably exert, a powerful influence in widening the range of thought and giving a new and lofty tone to the mind.

All these influences it was the constant aim of the Reformers to make bear as extensively and powerfully as possible upon *the mass of the people*. This was another effect of their leading principle. It says to the laity as well as to the clergy, “Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.” It refers *all* “to the law and to the testimony,” and makes every man directly responsible to God for his opinions and conduct. Hence, wherever the Reformation extended, a general and ardent desire was immediately excited among the people, to qualify themselves to read the Scriptures, and the numerous other writings on religion, with which they were furnished by their new instructors. Schools and academies, as well as colleges, were extensively established, and filled with pupils. While, every where, the minds of all were continually roused to action, and furnished with knowledge, by the instructions of the living preacher ; who was stimulated, by love for the souls of his people, and by the desire of triumph for his party in the great moral conflict going forward, to promote as extensively as possible, among

all classes, and by every means, a thorough knowledge of the doctrines and duties of religion.

By these various means, in those countries which embraced the Protestant faith, science and literature, in all their departments, were greatly and rapidly advanced and improved ; and general information was diffused among the *people* to an extent at that time utterly unprecedented. Wherever the principles of the Reformation were *completely* triumphant, colleges and universities were opened to all who chose to resort to them, and the means of acquiring what we denominate a common education were furnished to the whole community.*

Nearly as great, and yet more important in its influence, was the change produced in the *moral* character of the people among whom Protestantism prevailed. They were not sent to the Bible, and taught with so much fidelity by their spiritual guides, without fruit unto holiness. Multitudes sincerely embraced the unadulterated religion of the Scriptures. And the very object of this religion, and its unfailing influence when received into the heart, is to make men virtuous. It teaches them to restrain and subdue their passions, to master their own spirits, and govern themselves ; and to esteem as highly, and make as vigorous efforts to maintain, the rights of others as their own, and even to sacrifice every other interest but that of their salvation to the public good. Nor is this influence wholly confined to the truly pious ; but, where they are found in any considerable numbers, it extends from them, with greater or less power, through the whole community ; affecting, more or less, the opinions, the hopes and fears, the motives and conduct of all. Such was

* The provision made by the Congregationalists in New England, and by the Presbyterians in Scotland, for giving to all classes a common education, is well known. One of the Canons of the Synod of Dort, in which nearly all the Reformed Churches then existing were represented, enjoins upon the Consistories of the several congregations to provide for the establishment and support of parochial schools. I use the phrase 'Reformed Churches' as it is used by Mosheim in his Ecclesiastical History, to denote those churches which agreed, for the most part, in doctrine and discipline with the Church of Geneva, in distinction from those of the Lutheran persuasion. Among the Lutherans also the common people were almost universally qualified to read the Scriptures.

actually the result, in an eminent degree, of that revival of primitive piety which followed the Reformation.*

By this intellectual and moral elevation, the people were prepared for a government of laws. And the consequence was that, in all countries which embraced the Protestant faith, political changes speedily occurred decidedly advantageous to the people.†

There were also other influences and results which must not be passed without notice.

The application of their master principle by the Reformers led to the discovery of that fundamental truth, so fully recognized in the Scriptures, that *God alone is lord of the conscience*. This all-important truth was, indeed, but partially understood, for a time, by the most enlightened promoters of the Reformation. By some it was disputed, and even denied. But by that class of Protestants from whom we are descended, it was, at length, fully understood, and received as a fundamental truth. Thus the radical principle of *religious* freedom was elicited; which, by an easy and natural gradation, led to the discovery of political rights.‡

Another effect of that recourse to the Scriptures which resulted from the Reformation was, the speedy and universal discovery, by those brought under its influence, that there was no warrant for that system of priestly domination by which, throughout Christendom, the very minds and con-

* "Nothing is worthy of more serious attention than the difference in point of morals which is found between Catholic and Protestant countries. A degree of dissoluteness and licentiousness appears in the former, which always forms a striking contrast with what is seen in the latter, which, bad as they are, may be reckoned pure and correct when compared with Catholic countries." Villers, p. 346, Note.

† In the now Protestant cantons of Switzerland, in Holland, and in Great Britain, the form of the governments was changed, or essentially modified, in favor of the people. And in the Protestant States of Germany, in Denmark and Sweden, though the constitution of the governments was not altered, they became practically less despotic. Villers, pp. 172—223.

‡ "The will to be free in matters of conscience is the same at bottom with the will to be free in matters of state." Villers, p. 181. "There is not a truth to be gathered from history more certain, or more momentous, than this, that civil liberty cannot long be separated from religious liberty, without danger, and ultimately without destruction, to both. Wherever religious liberty exists, it will, first or last, bring in, and establish, political liberty. Wherever it is suppressed, the church establishment will, first or last, become the engine of despotism, and overthrow, unless it be itself overthrown, every vestige of political right." Judge Story's Centennial Discourse at Salem in 1828. p. 46.

sciences of men had, for so many centuries, been bound as with fetters of iron. The authority of the Pope was utterly renounced by all Protestants. The question now arose, How ought the Church to be governed? and was, unfortunately, not, in all cases, determined by the sole authority of Scripture. In those countries where the government conducted the work of reformation, the Church was moulded to suit the views and interests of the rulers: ecclesiastical dignitaries were retained, who governed the Church in subordination to the king. But where the Reformation was begun and carried on by the people, the constitution of the Church was generally settled much after the primitive model. The rights of the people were acknowledged. Jesus Christ was held to be the sole head of the church; and whatever powers pertain to the body as a voluntary association, were vested in the whole company of believers, and exercised, either by themselves, or their representatives. A form of church-government was instituted essentially popular; which, it will be at once obvious to every reflecting mind, would operate favorably for civil liberty, just as certainly as men's principles and habits will influence their actions.* An influence too, which would be greatly augmented in that age, from the intimate connection in which all had been accustomed to view the Church and the State.

And when led to investigate the pretensions of the Pope to raise up and cast down kings, men were naturally conducted to the inquiry, by what authority kings exercised their dominion. And the Catholic princes who attempted by

* "No bishop, no king," was a maxim of that determined enemy of popular rights, James I. of England. During the progress of the Reformation "it was formed into an express and fundamental maxim of state, that Catholicism was the best support of absolute power, while Protestantism was favorable to rebellion and the republican spirit. It would not, even in our days, be possible to drive this maxim out of the heads of many statesmen." Villers, pp. 276, 277. "It soon became apparent [in the reign of Elizabeth in England] that they [the Puritans] *tended naturally towards republicanism*; for certain it is that monarchy and episcopacy, the throne and the altar, are much more nearly connected, than writers of bad faith, or little reflection, have sought to persuade mankind." "Besides this *insensible but natural inclination towards democracy, which arises from the principles of a popular church-government*, there was another cause why the current should set in that direction; it was only under commonwealths that the Puritans saw their beloved discipline flourish." London Quarterly Review, xvi. 517, 518.

force of arms to put a stop to the Reformation, drove its advocates to the discovery that sovereigns may be lawfully resisted when they encroach upon the rights of their subjects. "These novelties," said Francis I. of France, when conversing, one day, on the influence of the Reformation, "These novelties tend to nothing less than the overthrow of all monarchy, divine and human."* And the actual result was that, in a great portion of Europe, the Papal tyranny was overthrown; and in all countries in which the Reformation prevailed, the prerogatives of monarchs were much reduced, or new governments were instituted essentially republican.

From this general survey permit me now to turn your attention to a brief view of the progress of the Reformation in England. In that nation it was begun and carried on by the government, while in the other countries to which it extended, the leaders in commencing and conducting it were of the people. This peculiarity of the Reformation in England was productive of many evils, from some of which the people of that country are not wholly relieved to this day; yet, in one respect it was overruled for a good which far more than counterbalances those evils. In other countries the work of reform was generally carried forward, almost at once, to the extent of the views of the learned and pious instruments employed by Providence in its promotion; and thus established, by universal consent, in a state of much imperfection: and thus has it been continued in those countries to the present time. But in England, the government, in its capriciousness and tyranny, stopped in the work of reform, far short of the other Protestant Churches, and of the wishes of its own most able and devoted Reformers. This produced collision; led to rigid examination of the rights and duties of kings and subjects, first in regard to religion, and then in regard to government; and ultimately struck out that spirit of religious and civil freedom, which

* Villers, p. 189.

the Puritans preserved from extinction in the mother country, and brought to maturity in this western world.

Henry VIII. began the Reformation in England, to gratify his furious passions : and, as his passions dictated, he conducted it, till his death ; none scarcely, daring to utter a whisper of opposition to his capricious and tyrannical proceedings. One circumstance, however, occurred which, in the present connection, is worthy of special notice. While “ a most obedient son of the Papacy,” Henry published a book “ against Luther, in defence of the seven sacraments of the Romish Church ;” which procured from the Pope, for him and his successors, the title of “ Defender of the Faith.”* This book Luther answered, with a boldness and superiority of argument which greatly exasperated Henry. These circumstances probably had an influence in producing the unquestioned fact, that Luther and Lutheranism had comparatively little effect on the reformation in England, and the principal direct influence from abroad in promoting it was sought and emanated from the famous John Calvin, the other great leader in the work of pulling down the Popish hierarchy.† Many English students resorted to Geneva, to receive the instructions of this distinguished theologian. His writings, too, were extensively circulated, and studied, and exerted a powerful influence in England. Two results followed of great importance to the cause of civil and religious liberty. The divines of England became familiarly acquainted with, and many of them warmly attached to, the form of church-government instituted by Calvin at Geneva, which was far more democratical than the ecclesiastical polity established in the countries reformed under the influence of Luther. And the peculiar form of religious doctrine at first propagated, and for a long time universally adopted,

* Neal's History of the Puritans, American edition, i. 56.

† Another circumstance which subsequently had a still greater influence in producing this result was, the invitation to England, early in the reign of Edward VI. of Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, distinguished divines of the continent, who were of the Reformed or Calvinistic class of Protestants, and who were made divinity professors at Oxford and Cambridge. Neal i. 94.

in England, was that usually designated by the title Calvinistic.* The influence which the former of these results would exert on the cause of religious and civil liberty has been already stated; that of the latter shall be evinced by the statements of another, who thought not, most probably, what honorable testimony he was giving to this oft maligned system of religious doctrine. A late writer of great force and eloquence,† in delineating the character of the Puritans, in which, he justly considers, is to be found the main spring of their wonderful achievements, thus expresses himself. "The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know Him, to serve Him, to enjoy Him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with Him face to face. Hence originated their contempt of earthly distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but His favor; and, *confident of that*, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt *assured* that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had

* Neal, i. 544—549.

† The writer of the review of Milton. Edinburgh Review, xlii. 339.

charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands ; their diadems, crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt : For they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language ; nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged—on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, *who had been destined, before the heaven and earth was created*, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been *ordained* on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will, by the pen of the evangelist, and the harp of the prophet. He had been rescued by no common Deliverer, from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.” How just, as well as eloquent, this delineation ? And how pervading, in this noble character, the doctrines of the evangelical system ? How vital in its production, does the candid observer perceive, the doctrines of *divine decrees*, of *assurance*, and of *the perseverance of the saints*, those distinctive peculiarities of the Calvinistic faith ?* Indeed, my hearers, much as the name of Calvin has been scoffed at and loaded with reproach by many sons of freedom, there is not a historical proposition more susceptible of complete demonstration than this, that

* “In tracing the coherence among the systems of modern theology, we may observe, that the doctrine of absolute decrees has ever been intimately connected with the enthusiastic spirit.” “The spirit, too, of enthusiasm, bold, daring, and uncontrolled, strongly disposed their [the Puritans] minds to adopt republican tenets.” Hume, Hist. of England, iii. 372, 690.

NO MAN HAS LIVED TO WHOM THE WORLD IS UNDER GREATER OBLIGATIONS FOR THE LIBERTY IT NOW ENJOYS THAN JOHN CALVIN. That liberty has been derived, all of it, from the Puritans ;* and no individual had so much influence in forming the principles and character of the Puritans as Calvin.

Henry VIII. was succeeded in the throne of England by the amiable and pious Edward VI. ; during whose short reign the Reformation was carried forward to the state in which it is now by law established in that kingdom. All the English Reformers were gratified with the ecclesiastical changes made in this reign : most of them, however, hoping for further modifications ; which would, no doubt, have been made, had the life of Edward been prolonged.†

His untimely death made way for the accession of “the bloody Mary.” Papacy was restored ; and a violent persecution of the Protestants ensued. This was a most untoward event. Yet it was a necessary part of that “severe discipline” by which Providence was preparing a portion of the nation for the discovery and maintenance of the principles of religious and civil freedom. The sincere Protestants, both ministers and laymen, to save their lives, retired in great numbers, to the continent, and, in various places, were kindly received and entertained, especially at Frankfort, where they were most numerous. Here, simply with a view to obtain accommodation for public worship, and not give offence to the French congregation whose church they were permitted to use a portion of every Sabbath, they agreed to vary their mode of conducting the public service from that which had been enjoined by king Edward. This, after a time, produced among them an unhappy contention, which issued in the division, ever since continued, into CONFORMISTS and PURITANS. The latter party were, at last, constrained to

* Principles and institutions in some degree popular had, indeed, existed in the English government, derived from the Saxons ; but they had, when the Puritans arose, been either subverted, or their influence done away, by the encroachments of the king’s prerogative ; so that the first principles of liberty had to be struck out anew.

† Neal, i. 86—125.

leave Frankfort, and retired to Geneva, where they were received with great kindness, and had a church assigned them for their worship. Here, deeming themselves released from obligation to use the service-book of king Edward, as it was "now set aside by act of Parliament," and they were "in a strange land," they adopted, and used for several years while their exile continued, a form of worship and discipline resembling that of the Genevan Church, and materially differing from that soon to be re-established in their own country.* For this simpler liturgy and more democratic church-government they formed a strong attachment, which was to be productive of important effects upon their return to England. While residing at Geneva they also prepared and published a translation of the Bible, with notes, in which they were led, by the persecution carrying on by the government at home, to assert the lawfulness, in certain cases, of resisting the authority of kings. This Bible was afterwards generally circulated in England; and the "traiterous conceits," as king James styled them, in its notes,† no doubt had an influence upon the political feeling of the nation.

Mary died in 1558, and was succeeded by Elizabeth, who had been educated in the Protestant faith. Papacy was again abolished, and the Reformed religion restored, as it had been established under Edward VI.: absolute authority being given, by act of parliament, to the queen and her successors in regard to religious doctrine, worship and discipline; "all persons in any public employs, whether civil or ecclesiastical," being required to take "an oath in recognition of the queen's supremacy in all causes ecclesiastical and civil, on penalty of forfeiting all their promotions in the Church, and of being declared incapable of holding any public office."‡ The Puritans, who had returned home upon Elizabeth's accession, all took the oath; hoping that,

* Neal, i. 148—155.

† See Neal ii. 41, and the account of the authorized English version of the Bible prefixed to Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary.

‡ Neal, i. 166.

in the exercise of her supremacy, the queen would effect the further reformation they so ardently desired. Happy would have been the consequences, in many respects, had the hope been realized. But then, the Puritans would have obtained from the government what they wished, and been satisfied; and the principles of religious and civil liberty would not have been elicited. Providence, therefore, in wisdom, permitted the queen to decide, that there should be no more changes in religion, and that all must, under severe penalties, conform, in every particular, to the established worship.* And this determination she proceeded rigorously to enforce, by deprivation, fines, imprisonment, banishment and execution; not permitting even the parliament to interfere. The effect was, what the effect of persecution commonly is, to make the sufferers more devotedly attached to their principles, and to drive them to new applications of them, and new methods of defending them. With these views the Puritans, under the guidance of the fundamental principle of the Reformation, were stimulated to a more diligent and prayerful study of the Scriptures. And various and most happy were the consequences.

They became convinced of the moral and perpetual obli-

* The controversy at first related chiefly to the habits of the clergy and the ceremonies of worship. The Puritans have often been greatly blamed for their stiffness in regard to these, in themselves, confessedly, indifferent things. Among their descendants, for whom, at so great sacrifices, they obtained so rich an inheritance, are found those who think they were highly censurable in this particular. But let their reasons be attentively considered, and let candor decide. They alleged, 1. That the *habits* were the known badges of popery, and regarded extensively by the people, who had been brought up under the Romish superstition, as giving validity to the administrations of the priests; and the *ceremonies* were considered as having an inherent efficacy: it was therefore essential to a thorough reformation that both should be laid aside. 2. Those who enjoined them admitted that they were not required by scriptural authority; but the fundamental principle of the Reformation was, that the Scriptures are the sufficient and *only* rule of faith and practice. 3. Christ is the sole lawgiver of his Church, and has directed all things necessary to be observed in it to the end of the world; therefore, when he has indulged a liberty to his followers, it is as much their duty to maintain it, as to observe any other of his precepts. If things acknowledged to be *indifferent* may be *imposed* by the civil authority, then that authority may *take away liberty of conscience* where Christ has left it *free*. Such a principle ought to be resisted, at all times, and in its every application. *Obsta principiis*, was the grand principle with the Puritans, in reference to encroachments upon their religious rights, as it was afterwards with their descendants in the American colonies in reference to the violation of their civil rights. "The wisdom of zeal for any object is not to be measured by the particular nature of that object, but by the nature of the *principle*, which the circumstances of the times, or of society, have identified with such object." President Quincy's Centennial Address at Boston, in 1830, p. 16.

gation of the fourth commandment ; and “were,” consequently, their historian attests, “strict observers of the Christian Sabbath or Lord’s day. It was,” he says, “a distinguishing mark of a Puritan in these times,” i. e. in Elizabeth’s reign, “to see him going to church twice a day, with his Bible under his arm. And while others were at plays and interludes, at revels, or walking in the fields, or at the diversions of bowling, fencing, &c. on the evening of the Sabbath, these, with their families, were employed in reading the Scriptures, singing psalms, catechising their children, repeating sermons, and prayer. Nor was this only the work of the Lord’s day ; but they had their hours of devotion on the week days, esteeming it their duty to take care of the souls, as well as the bodies, of their servants. They were circumspect as to all the excesses of eating, drinking, apparel, and lawful diversions, being frugal in housekeeping, industrious in their particular callings, honest and exact in their dealings, and solicitous to give to every one his own.” They “were not,” indeed, “without their failings. Their notions of the civil and religious rights of mankind were,” as yet, “derived too much from the Theocracy of the Jews, which was now at an end. Their behaviour was severe and rigid, far removed from the fashionable freedoms and vices of the age ; and possibly they might be too censorious, in not making those distinctions between youth and age, grandeur and mere decency, as the nature and circumstances of things would admit. But, with all their faults, *they were the most pious and devout people in the land.*”^{*} With this character, they were fitted to govern themselves ; they were now prepared to be free. And speedily did a wise and gracious Providence lead them to the discovery and successful maintenance of the principles of religious and civil freedom.

Hitherto Puritans and Conformists had agreed in the

^{*} Neal, i. 560.

opinion that it belonged to the government alone to prescribe forms of discipline and worship for the Church, differing only in their views of the extent to which the government ought to proceed in laying aside the additions which, all believed, had been made to the model left by the Apostles.* But in the discussions produced by Elizabeth's perseverance in refusing to proceed further in the work of reform, and by her severe measures for enforcing uniformity, juster principles were evolved. Early in Elizabeth's reign, Mr. Cartwright, a leader of the Puritans, published "An Admonition to the Parliament," in which he maintained, that "the Christian sovereign ought not to be called Head under Christ of the particular and visible churches within his dominions," and that "the civil magistrate ought not to ordain ceremonies, or determine controversies in the Church, as long as they do not intrench upon his temporal authority."†

Some years after the same Mr. Cartwright maintained in his divinity lectures at Cambridge, and published, that "The names and functions of archbishops and archdeacons ought to be abolished, *as having no foundation in Scripture*. The offices of the lawful ministers of the Church *ought to be reduced to the apostolical institution*; the bishop to preach the word of God and pray, and deacons to take care of the poor. The government of the Church ought not to be intrusted with bishop's chancellors, or the officials of archdeacons; but every Church should be governed by its own minister and presbyters. Bishops should not be created by civil authority, but ought to be fairly chosen by the Church."‡ Hitherto both parties had allowed that the ecclesiastical constitution might be very much regulated by convenience and motives of state policy. Here was the discovery and advancement of the principle that, in this department as well as in that of doctrine, nothing should be determined or sanctioned without the warrant of Scrip-

* Neal, ii. Author's Preface, ix.

† Neal, i. 173.

‡ Neal, i. 279.

ture. This, it will be at once apparent, was another very important step in the developement of the principles of religious and civil liberty. Mr. Cartwright, for advancing such "dangerous doctrines," was deprived of his professorship and expelled the university, and constrained to go into voluntary banishment. But his opinions were embraced by the whole body of the Puritans.

In the mean time, "several of the deprived ministers" residing in and about London, had, upon "solemn consultation with their friends" and earnest "prayer," come to an "agreement, that it was their duty, in their present circumstances, to break off from the public churches, and to assemble, as they had opportunity, in private houses, or elsewhere, to worship God in a manner that might not offend against the light of their consciences."* The assemblies instituted in consequence of this determination were soon suppressed by the government. But the conduct and motives of those who had held them were, by their Puritan brethren, generally approved. And thus was developed the important principle that it was lawful, for conscience sake, to resist the civil and ecclesiastical authority in separating from the Established Church.

While these discussions and developements were going forward, the queen and the bishops had been constantly devising new expedients, and increasing the severity of their measures, for enforcing rigid uniformity. These violent proceedings at length drove "multitudes to a total separation, and so far prejudiced" them "as not to allow the Church of England to be a true Church, nor her ministers true ministers; they renounced all communion with her, not only in the prayers and ceremonies, but in hearing the word and the sacraments. These were the people called **BROWNISTS**, from one *Robert Brown*, a preacher in the diocese of Norwich;" who, besides the errors just mentioned and some others, first among the Reformers in England maintained the

* Neal, i. 252.

following truths, so fundamental in their bearing upon religious and civil liberty, viz. "that, according to Scripture, every Church ought to be confined within the limits of a single congregation, and that the government should be democratical;" that churches should be constituted by "such as desired to be members making a confession of their faith in the presence of each other, and signing a covenant; that the whole power of admitting and excluding members, with the deciding of all controversies, was in the brotherhood; that church officers, for preaching the word and taking care of the poor, were to be chosen by the free suffrages of the brethren; and that in church censures, there should be an entire separation of the ecclesiastical and civil sword." These are the principles afterwards adopted by the Independents in England, and, with some slight modifications, by the Congregationalists in this country. Brown published his sentiments in 1582. Not long after he gathered a separate congregation upon his own principles; whose members the persecuting vigilance of the government compelled to flee to Holland, where they formed themselves into a church, which soon, however, fell into divisions, and, being deserted by its pastor, who returned to the Established Church, was at last broken up. But the seeds of separation which Brown had sown in several parts of England, were not destroyed. His followers increased; and, having discarded his extravagancies and most of his errors, became a considerable body in the latter part of this and the beginning of the subsequent reign.*

James I. succeeded Elizabeth in 1603. From him the Puritans entertained high expectations, as he had been educated a Presbyterian, and had professed a warm attachment for that discipline. But, doubtless for the same reasons as in the case of Elizabeth, Providence disappointed their ex-

* Neal, i. 376—379. "In the reign of Elizabeth, Sir Walter Raleigh declared in Parliament, that the Brownists alone, in their various congregations, were increased to the number of twenty thousand.—Sir Simonds D'Ewes' Journals of the Parliaments during the reign of queen Elizabeth. London, 1682. p. 517."

pectations. James followed in the course of his predecessor, adopting additional and more rigorous measures against the Puritans. These new severities drove yet greater numbers to Holland; among whom was the venerated ROBINSON, and those who, with him, formed the English Church at Leyden.* And with them went those pure and almost perfect principles of religious liberty, and those elements of civil freedom, which had been struck out by the instrumentality of Robert Brown; separated, however, as has been intimated, from his extravagances and most of his errors.†

But even here, the depositories of these principles and elements, fraught with so many blessings to mankind, are not permitted to remain. Had such been the arrangements of Providence, the sacred treasure would soon have been lost, from the encroachments of a foreign population and of surrounding corruptions.‡ To preserve it, these martyrs in the cause of religious and civil freedom determine to abandon the comforts of their newly acquired home, and encounter the dangers of the ocean, and the perils of this western wilderness. They embark for America, and establish the colony of Plymouth; and are soon followed by a more numerous band, of similar principles and spirit, who found the colony of Massachusetts Bay.

And now, a stranger to the history would be ready to say, being escaped from the restraints and oppressions of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, we shall see their principles at once carried out to their full extent, and perfect religious and political freedom at length obtaining an existence in the world.

* Neal, ii. Chapters 1 and 2.

† Among the errors of Brown which the Independents, of whom Robinson and others were the leaders, rejected, one of the most important was, requiring in those who joined their churches a renunciation and denunciation of the Church of England. "If any," says Governor Winslow, (as quoted in the Appendix to Rev. Mr. Storrs' Sermon at Plymouth, Dec. 22, 1826, p. 39,) "if any joining us have, with the manifestation of their faith and holiness, held forth therewith separation from the Church of England, I have divers times heard either Mr. Robinson our pastor, or Mr. Brewster our elder, stop them forthwith, *showing them that we required no such thing at their hands*; but only to hold forth faith in Christ Jesus, holiness in the fear of God, and submission to every appointment and ordinance of God." Those are therefore in error who represent Robinson and the Church at Leyden as rigid "Separatists."

‡ See Morton's New England Memorial, pp. 18—20.

But, no. Our fathers were not yet sufficiently instructed in the difficult lesson, nor was the way yet fully prepared in the inscrutable arrangements of Providence. Not only did they, of necessity, retain an allegiance to the British crown, but, by their own voluntary act, they immediately determined that none should be freemen but members of their churches; that no church should be gathered without the consent of the civil magistrate; and that the people, of whatever persuasion, should be taxed for the support of their ministers; and enforced these regulations with rigor, by fines, imprisonment, and banishment. Institutions wide, indeed, from those of perfect religious and civil freedom. But let not your wonder at what has often been, inconsiderately, called their inconsistency,* turn off your contemplation from the wisdom of an overruling Providence, in providing, by this very means, for the ultimate perfect developement and establishment of the principles of religious and civil liberty. Had not our fathers excluded, as they did, all other sects from authority and influence among them, the English hierarchy would soon have extended to them here its iron grasp; and thus, the whole object of their emigration would have been frustrated, and the spirit of freedom, both civil and religious, extinguished. As it was,—though evils resulted, some of which continue in their influence to this day,—yet the *far greater good* was accomplished, of keeping alive, and further and further developing, in the independence of their churches and the freedom of their elections, the principles of religious and civil liberty, and guarding them effectually from extinction, and even from serious encroachment.†

* *Inconsiderately* called their inconsistency, because every one acquainted with the circumstances of that age, must feel, that it would have been little, if any, short of a miracle that could have brought them, in their circumstances, to a full understanding of the principles of religious and civil liberty. See this ground of their vindication well stated, by the Hon. Judge Story, in his Centennial Discourse at Salem, pp. 45—51, and by the Hon. Edward Everett, in his Centennial Address at Charlestown in 1830, pp. 42—44.

† This is the principal ground of vindication of the Fathers of New England in regard to their religious institutions. See it ably and triumphantly stated in President Quincy's Centennial Address at Boston, Sept. 1830, pp. 25—29, and Note F. The "union" they established "between church and state," Judge Story has styled, in his Centennial Discourse, p. 55, a "fundamental error." I have myself called it, in

In the mean while, by the influence of their Puritan brethren who had remained in England, the throne and the hierarchy had been overturned under Charles I. ; and toleration and a high degree of political liberty engrafted into the British constitution by the revolution of 1688 ; and civil and ecclesiastical oppression in the old world had driven to the colonies south of New England multitudes who had been trained under the influence of principles and forms of church-government derived, like those of the Puritans, from the Reformers of Geneva.* And the emigrants who were not of this class were, most of them, Protestants, who had adopted the principles established in England on the accession of William and Mary.†

At length, when the fulness of time was come, the all-wise Ruler of the nations permitted those usurpations and oppressions on the part of the parent country, which led to our independence, and consummated our *political freedom*. And now was to be formed a government for confederated States, all possessing equal rights, in regard to which the arrangements of Providence had been such, in respect to re-

a former publication, "a material error." History of the Old South Church in Boston, p. 4. It was, indeed the cause of real and great evils, some of which continue to this day, and which I have stated in the History just referred to, Sermon III. Further investigation and reflection have, however, led me to doubt whether it should be called an error. I see not by what other arrangement they could, *in their circumstances*, have secured the privileges for which they had emigrated, and preserved among them, for more perfect developement, the principles of religious and civil freedom.—The valuable purposes to be effected by this arrangement have long since been fully accomplished. Why then should it, under any modification, be continued ? It is strange indeed that in Massachusetts alone of all the free States of this Union, the support of religious institutions should still be *required* by the *State*. When will this Commonwealth imitate the example of all the other members of the confederacy, in abolishing entirely and forever all connection between church and state, and thus perfecting her religious and civil freedom ?

* Of this class were the whole body of emigrants from Holland, Scotland, and the north of Ireland, and a large portion of those from Germany, settled in the middle and southern colonies.

† The only exception was the colony of Maryland, established by Lord Baltimore, and composed chiefly of Roman Catholics. But even upon these, attached as they were to a religious system whose essential principle is blind submission to authority, such had been the influence of the persecutions they had suffered from the Church and government of England, that, in settling their government, they enacted, that "no persons professing to believe in Jesus Christ should be molested in their religion, or in the free exercise thereof, or be compelled to the belief or exercise of any other religion, against their consent ; so that they be not unfaithful to the proprietor, or conspire against the civil government." Chalmers' Political Annals, p. 218. A brief account of the civil and religious institutions of the various colonies, from their establishment to the revolution, may be seen in Pitkin's History of the United States, vol. I.

ligion, that in some Congregationalism was established,* and in others Episcopacy;† in one State the Baptists predominated,‡ in another the Quakers,§ and in another the Roman Catholics,|| and in the majority, there was among the people great diversity of religious sentiment and practice. In such a state of things, what could be done, but leave the Church, as its divine Founder had left it, to be simply protected, and to take care of itself, in sole dependence on His blessing? A necessity created by Providence, chiefly in directing the influence of that love of religion which it had produced by means of the Reformation, compelled the full establishment of *religious freedom*; for which the same Providence had now, for the first time since the foundation of the world, fully prepared the way, in the minds of men, and in the circumstances of the nations.

Such is a sketch of the developement, and full establishment in this beloved country, for the benefit of the whole world, of religious and civil liberty: all by the influence of the Protestant Reformation, and by the immediate instrumentality of the Puritans. Truly *they* were “the Lord’s portion; the lot of his inheritance. He found them in a” moral “desert, and in a waste howling wilderness. He led them about, he instructed them, he kept them as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him;”—all “to do them good in their latter end,” and make them the means of unspeakable and universal good.

Of the numerous interesting reflections that crowd upon my attention, I will trespass further on your patience to name but one. HOW OBVIOUS THE DEPENDENCE OF LIBERTY ON

* In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. † In Virginia and New York. ‡ In Rhode Island. § In Pennsylvania. || In Maryland.

VITAL RELIGION. Without this, we have the testimony of infidels, of the highest distinction and authority, that the changes in the ecclesiastical and civil institutions of Europe, which began in the sixteenth century and have ever since been meliorating the condition of men, would never have been effected.* The religion of the Bible, exerting its uncorrupted influence on the minds of men, produced the Reformation, and originated all the happy influences exerted by that great event upon the intellectual, moral, social and political condition of man. Their pre-eminence in scriptural religion carried our Puritan ancestors so much further than others in the work of ecclesiastical and political reform. Their love of this sustained them in their innumerable sacrifices and sufferings; impelled them in their unwearied search for the original and unalienable rights of men; and led them to discover, one by one, and assert, and successfully maintain, the principles of religious and civil freedom. This it was, pre-eminently and, I may almost say, alone, that fitted them for the ultimate acquisition, and enjoyment, and permanent establishment, of such perfect liberty.

How, then, shall we preserve the rich inheritance they have left us? By imbibing, and cherishing, and giving a controlling influence on all our population to scriptural religion. How shall we diffuse the blessing through the

* D'Alembert, a celebrated infidel of France in the time of her first revolution, says, "The middle of the sixteenth century beheld a sudden change in religion, and in the system of a great part of Europe. The new doctrines of the Reformers, defended on one side, and attacked on the other, with *that ardor which the cause of God, well or ill understood, is alone able to inspire*, equally obliged their defenders, and their opponents, to acquire instruction. Emulation, *animated by this powerful motive*, increased all kinds of knowledge; and light, raised from amidst error and dissension, was cast upon all objects, even such as appeared most foreign to those disputes." Elements of Philosophy, I., as quoted by Villers, pp. 397, 398. Says Hume, "In that great revolution of manners which happened during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the only nations which had the honorable, though melancholy, advantage of making an effort for their expiring privileges, were such as, together with the principles of civil liberty, *were animated with a zeal for religious parties and opinions*." "In their circumstances, *nothing but a pious zeal*, which disregards all motives of human prudence, *could have made them entertain hopes of preserving any longer those privileges* which their ancestors, through so many ages, had transmitted to them." History of England, iii. 332, 333. And, speaking of the house of Stuart, he says, "So extensive was the royal authority, and so firmly established in all its parts, that it is probable the patriots of that age would have despaired of resisting it, *had they not been stimulated by religious motives, which inspire a courage unsurmountable by any human obstacle*."

earth? By extending through it the knowledge and the influence of scriptural religion. Not every thing that calls itself the religion of the Bible. Not a religion that brings the authority of revelation to a level with human reason, and knows not the meaning of Scripture, and attaches no special importance to any particular opinions, and takes away the sanctions of God's law, and the power of the Saviour's cross, and can accommodate its doctrines and practices to convenience, and fashion, and purposes of worldly ambition. Where had now been the liberties of the world, had such been our fathers' religion? Standing here in the full blaze of the light of their history, as patriots and philanthropists, how can I commend to you such a religion? No, my hearers, no. It is of the religion of the Puritans that I speak. A religion which made the plain declarations of God's word its authoritative and infallible guide; and attached the utmost importance to opinions; and would receive no article of faith or rule of conduct which had not the sanction of Scripture; and received unhesitatingly its every teaching; and viewed every thing as regulated by Jehovah's controlling agency, and developing his wise and unchanging purposes; and regarded all human conduct as bearing upon an eternal retribution; and lived continually under the humbling and purifying influence of the Redeemer's cross; and aspired to an assurance of an interest in God's everlasting favor, and to habitual and intimate communion with him; and for principle, even when involving no direct advantage, would sacrifice comfort, and reputation, and property, and life; and aimed, in all things, to exhibit supreme love to God and impartial love to men. Let this religion, any where, pervade the minds and form the characters of men, and they cannot but be free.

* "In 1772, about two hundred and fifty clergymen of the Church of England petitioned the Legislature for relief from the necessity of subscribing the articles of that Church, because that subscription was opposed to their conscientious belief. Their prayer was rejected by the House of Commons, and the subscription was enforced. Notwithstanding this, the petitioners, with the exception of Mr. Lindsey, clung to the emoluments of a Church, the doctrines of which they had publicly declared they no longer believed."

By your veneration, then, for your illustrious ancestors, by your love for your country, by your desire for the happiness of men, by the imperative admonitions of God's providence and word, we charge you, yield up your heart and life to the influence of the religion of the Puritans ; and do all in your power, by your example, your influence, your property, to maintain and extend its efficacy among your countrymen, and to diffuse it through the world. Suffer it not, when you can prevent it, to be perverted or reviled. Preserve its sacred regard for the institution of the Sabbath, that guardian of the authority, and chief source of the energy, of the whole moral law. Guard most vigilantly the independence of the churches, and their entire separation from the state. Do what you can to have all in this country, and throughout the earth, possessed of the Scriptures, and enabled to read them, and their understandings and hearts imbued with their subduing, elevating, and sanctifying truths. Fill this land with the religion of the Puritans, and its liberties cannot be destroyed. Fill the world with the religion of the Puritans, and the world is free.

NOTE.

It may not be unacceptable to the reader to add a few particulars in confirmation of the statement made on page 18, in reference to the influence of Calvin in forming the opinions and character of the Puritans, and thus contributing to the discovery and establishment of the principles of religious and civil liberty.

The peculiarities of the religious doctrines of the Puritans had an important influence in producing in them determined and persevering resistance to arbitrary power, and a successful vindication of their religious and political rights. This fact is sufficiently illustrated in the quotation in the sermon from the *Edinburgh Review*. It is admitted by Hume, and by all, whatever their religious opinions, who have thoroughly investigated the springs of action in those discoverers and founders of religious and civil freedom. But the doctrinal views of the Puritans were derived from Calvin.

Their disapprobation of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by the English government was a prominent means of leading them to the discovery, and stimulating them to the successful vindication, of the principles of religious and civil liberty. And that disapprobation may be directly traced to the influence of Calvin. With him many of the leading Puritan divines studied theology, and were taught the importance of laying aside the whole mass of Popish additions to the simplicity of apostolic worship. When the difficulties arose among the exiles at Frankfort, in Mary's reign, about the use of king Edward's Liturgy, they asked the advice of Calvin, "who, having perused the English Liturgy, took notice, 'that there were many tolerable weaknesses in it, which, because at first they could not be amended, were to be suffered; but that it behoved the learned, grave, and godly ministers of Christ to enterprize farther, and to set up something more filed from rust, and purer. If religion,' says he, 'had flourished till this day in England, many of these things should have been corrected. But since the reformation is overthrown, and a church is to be set up in another place, where you are

at liberty to establish what order is most for edification, I cannot tell what they mean, who are so fond of the leavings of Popish dregs.'” When the Conformist party had triumphed at Frankfort, they “wrote to Mr. Calvin to countenance their proceedings; which that great divine could not do: but, after a modest excuse for intermeddling in their affairs, told them, that, ‘in his opinion, they were too much addicted to the English ceremonies; nor could he see to what purpose it was to burden the church with such hurtful and offensive things, when there was liberty to have a simple and more pure order.’” The Puritan part of the exiles retired to Geneva, and there prepared and published a service book, in the dedication of which they say, that “they had set up such an order as, in the judgment of Mr. Calvin and other learned divines, was most agreeable to Scripture, and the best Reformed churches.” And when, subsequently, the important step was taken by several Puritans in and about London, of breaking off from the established churches and setting up a separate congregation, they adopted for use, (as they say in their ‘agreement’ thus to separate,) “a book, and order of preaching, administration of sacraments and discipline, that the great Mr. Calvin had approved of, and which was free from the superstitions of the English service.” Neal, i. 152, 154, 155, 252.

But most important of all, in its influence on religious and civil liberty, was the attachment of the Puritans to a popular church government. And of the origin of this system we have the following account from ‘the judicious Hooker,’ prefixed to his famous work on Ecclesiastical Polity, written expressly against it. “A founder it had, whom, for mine own part, I think incomparably the wisest man that ever the French (Protestant) church did enjoy, since the hour it enjoyed him. His bringing up was in the civil law. Divine knowledge he gathered, not by hearing or reading, so much as by teaching others. For though thousands were debtors to him, as touching knowledge in that kind, yet he to none, but only to God, the author of that most blessed fountain the Book of Life, and of the admirable dexterity of wit, together with the helps of other learning, which were his guides. Two things of principal moment there are, which have deservedly procured him honor throughout the world: the one, his exceeding pains in composing the Institutions of the Christian religion; the other, his no less industrious travels for the exposition of Holy Scripture, according to the same Institutions. In which two things, whosoever they were that after him bestowed their labor, he gained the advantage, of prejudice against them if they gainsayed, and of glory above them if they consented. Of what account the Master of Sentences was in the Church of Rome, the same, and more, among the preachers of

the Reformed churches, Calvin had purchased ; so that the perfectest divines were judged they who were skillfulest in Calvin's writings ; his books being almost the very canon to judge both doctrine and discipline by."

These statements are confirmed by abundant testimony from writers of authority who had no good opinion of Calvin or his principles. Says *Hume*, (*History of England*, iii. 57.) "These disputes [about ceremonies, &c.] which had been started during the reign of Edward, were carried abroad by the Protestants who fled from the persecutions of Mary ; and as the zeal of these men had received an increase from the pious zeal of their enemies, they were generally inclined to carry their opposition to the utmost extremity against the practices of the Church of Rome. *Their communication with Calvin, and the other Reformers who followed the discipline and worship of Geneva, confirmed them in this obstinate reluctance* ; and though some of the refugees, particularly those who were established at Frankfort, still adhered to king Edward's Liturgy, the prevailing spirit carried these confessors to seek a still further reformation."

The celebrated *Dean Swift*, in a sermon preached on, what Tories and high churchmen in England have styled, "the martyrdom of king Charles I.," makes the following statements : "Upon the cruel persecution raised against the Protestants under Queen Mary, among great numbers who fled the kingdom to seek for shelter, several went and resided at *Geneva, which is a common-wealth, governed without a king, where the religion contrived by Calvin is, without the order of bishops*. When the Protestant faith was restored by queen Elizabeth, those who fled to Geneva returned, among the rest, home to England, and *were grown so fond of the government and religion of the place they had left*, that they used all possible endeavors to introduce both into their own country ; at the same time continually preaching and railing against ceremonies and distinct habits of the clergy, taxing whatever they disliked as a remnant of Popery ; and continued exceedingly troublesome to the church and state, under that great queen, as well as her successor king James I. These people called themselves Puritans, as pretending to a purer faith than those of the Established Church. And these were the founders of our Dissenters. They did not think it sufficient to leave all the errors of Popery ; but threw off many laudable and edifying institutions of the primitive Church, and at last even the government of bishops, which, having been ordained by the Apostles themselves, had continued without interruption, in all Christian churches, for above fifteen hundred years. And all this they did, not because those things were evil, but because they were kept by the Papists. From hence they proceeded, by degrees, to quarrel with the kingly

government ; because, as I have already said, the city of Geneva, to which their fathers had flown for refuge, was a commonwealth, or government of the people." Having thus stated the foundation and principles of Puritanism, the Dean proceeds with an account of its growth till the breaking out of the civil war ; and concludes the narrative as follows : " That odious Parliament, had first turned the bishops out of the House of Lords ; in a few years after they murdered their king ; then immediately abolished the whole House of Lords ; and so, at last, obtained their wishes, of having a government of the people, and a new religion, both after the manner of Geneva, without a king, a bishop, or a nobleman ; and this they blasphemously called, ' The kingdom of Christ and his saints.' "

In the same way *Dryden* traced the origin of republicanism in England, as appears from his political poem called *the Hind and the Panther* ; in which he characterizes the Romish Church under the name of the *Hind*, the English Church under that of the *Panther*, and the Presbyterian under that of the *Wolf*. In the following extract, the "kennel" means the city of Geneva ; the "puddle," its lake ; and the " wall," its rampart.

" The last of all the litter scap'd by chance,
And from Geneva first infested France.
Some authors thus his pedigree will trace ;
But others write him of an upstart race,
Because, of Wickliffe's brood, no mark he brings,
But his innate antipathy to kings.

* * * * *

What though your native kennel still be small,
Bounded betwixt a puddle and a wall ?
Yet your victorious colonies are sent,
Where the north ocean girds the continent.
Quicken'd with fire below, your monsters breed,
In fenny Holland, and in fruitful Tweed ;
And like the first, the last effects to be
Drawn to the dregs of a *democracy.*

* * * * *

But as the poisons of the deadliest kind
Are to their own unhappy coasts confin'd ;
So Presbyt'ry and pestilential zeal
Can flourish only in a COMMONWEAL."



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